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Abstract

Since the Nineties, postcolonial literature has become an increasingly popular specialism in academic institutions in the UK. The growing critical respect afforded to the cultural production of previously marginalised Anglophone nations is, of course, to be celebrated. However, the increasing institutionalisation within English departments of postcolonial studies ironically risks reinforcing the centrality of 'white', metropolitan English culture, and presenting the Anglophone world as peripheral and monolithic. If postcolonialism is nothing more than a means to revising canons and reading texts in departments of English, it might be viewed merely in terms of changes in the structure and constituencies of universities; but the claims of postcolonialism reach much further than curricular matters. Thus the question of changing constituencies within universities points to larger forces at work.

MONICA BUNGARO

Negotiating the Local and the Global: Some Uneasy Conjectures on Postcolonial Studies and Pedagogy

Since the Nineties, postcolonial literature has become an increasingly popular specialism in academic institutions in the UK. The growing critical respect afforded to the cultural production of previously marginalised Anglophone nations is, of course, to be celebrated. However, the increasing institutionalisation within English departments of postcolonial studies ironically risks reinforcing the centrality of 'white', metropolitan English culture, and presenting the Anglophone world as peripheral and monolithic. If postcolonialism is nothing more than a means to revising canons and reading texts in departments of English, it might be viewed merely in terms of changes in the structure and constituencies of universities; but the claims of postcolonialism reach much further than curricular matters. Thus the question of changing constituencies within universities points to larger forces at work.

As the field of postcolonial studies grows, and as teachers with varying degrees of preparation are pressed into its service to meet diversity and global studies requirements, my endeavour is to explore the degree of postcolonialism's and, as a consequence, the Western University intellectual's complicity with and/or rejection of neo-colonial practices and discourses. As teachers of postcolonial theory and literature within a postcolonial framework we are caught up in a discursive force field. The practice of our teaching is largely governed by a tension that characterises both curricula choices in particular and the engines of English departments in general. The normalisation of the unequal curricular space provided to Anglophone literatures within the academy subsumed under the framework of postcolonial theory has a material effect on the teaching of these literatures.

First of all, as a general rule, UK universities normally hire one postcolonialist to teach literatures that emanate from different countries, therefore holding the academic accountable for covering a diverse body of cultures and literatures. Although we live in an age of intense specialisation, specialists in African or Indian literature are rarely given the opportunity to teach their area of study and are supposed to teach two-thirds of the world while their colleagues teach such specialties as 'The Renaissance', 'Romanticism', 'The Victorians'.

Secondly, courses such as postcolonial literatures involve cutting across national lines, language barriers and time boundaries by offering a grab-bag of

canonical texts from five or six regions. What would the student learn about the 'shared experience' of postcolonial societies in a ten-week course that teaches a maximum of three texts from each region under the framework of a post-imperial theory? Despite postcolonialism's claim to deconstructing master narratives in favour of localised identity politics, the material conditions informing the teaching of postcolonialism in the Western academy seem to deny this claim. Our institutional position, most of the time, forces us to accept homogenising theories that create a unitary field out of disparate realities.

Thirdly, the institutional circuit of consumption in which postcolonial pedagogy is located is responsible for assuring validation to the field of postcolonial literature. The 'necessary practicalities' Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak refers to (62), seem to determine the way postcolonial literature is being taught in the UK. What is worth studying, teaching and talking about appears as what can best be parcelled out into a ten-week format, what the best available textbooks are (where best and the production of the best are seem to replicate the current demands of the international marketplace), how well this literature can be integrated into the English curriculum without disturbing the distribution requirements, what the most manageable topics in the university education system are, what projects are likely to be funded and so forth. Educational legacies of imperialism live on strongly with us and within our institutions.

Fourthly, the 'postcolonial' is broadly inclusive. Postcolonialism's spatial indeterminacy as to the regions to be considered as 'postcolonial' generates confusion among practitioners. Just as there are some who might prefer a rigidly structured postcolonial space that excludes settler nations, there may be also some who are looking for an answer to what kind of story is emerging from the postcolonial condition and advocate a global, open space, where a symphonic blend of voices that includes the Irish, native Americans, Koreans can be heard. If on the one hand, the replacement of Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin's definition of Postcolonial literatures ('all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day' 2) with a social and political conceptualisation of postcoloniality (San Juan 16) and the dismissal of race as a determining factor in who can have a voice in a postcolonial dialogue should be acclaimed, on the other, this amalgamation of voices and locations under the rubric of postcolonial theory poses both theoretical and practical problems to the teacher of postcolonial literature in terms of themes, temporal dimensions, time constraints and expertise.

On a theoretical level, since there are no clear temporal or spatial boundaries, this usage of postcolonial abolishes any possibility of drawing distinctions between the present and the past, or the indigenous oppressed and the oppressor settlers. The expansion of the historical scope of postcolonial studies succeeds by confounding many different colonialisms and suppressing others. On a more practical level, it is utopian to believe that teachers can know all the regions

equally well and be able to teach their literatures effectively, unless they are willing to become 'credentialed tour guides'.

As postcolonial literature is normally considered to be literature of the 'margin' and as the margin is usually defined in its relation to the centre in most postcolonial discussion, then postcolonial literature will be heavily invested in making the colonial experience its central premise. Texts from a variety of cultures are lumped together under the aegis of a unitary theory that while proclaiming commitment to difference and radical alterity, tends to obsessively insist on similarities among societies, and literatures as product of those societies. These same similarities, which are defined in terms of a limited set of themes and formal aspects, legitimise the current pedagogical arrangements of the academy. No doubt these themes do occur in some of the texts. However, the problem is that the theory only highlights those texts where these themes occur, thereby ignoring a vast quantity of work that would call the theory into question. The colonial experience is only one aspect of the history of what are known as postcolonial societies and postcolonial literature cannot only be taught in terms of 'writing back' but, in Dionne Brand's words, in terms of 'writing home'.

Postcolonial theory and, as a consequence, courses taught under its aegis, closes off several lines of inquiry that may be addressed to this literature in favour of the one that reads it as 'resisting' or 'subverting' the centre, the coloniser, the West, thus offering metropolitan powers a mirror in which their own reflection might be included. Starting from these premises, the imperative is to discuss and explore how the empire writes back not whether it writes back. Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge's suggestion that 'the native is always oppositional and the settler always complicit' (277) remains problematic. A perception of postcolonial literature as part of a global contest against colonial hegemony does not take into account that this politics normally intersects with another type of politics, that is, 'internal colonisation'. Writers critical of the colonial heritage simultaneously attack concepts and ideas within their local cultures that serve to reproduce and/or reinforce colonial frames of reference and practices in the guise of nationalist sentiment. Besides the inequalities produced by colonialism, there are other, older inequalities of race, caste, class and gender which must be investigated in our reading/teaching of literatures from these societies. Instead, postcolonial practices in the academy rarely engage with texts that deal with internal dissensions within a region. Scant attention is paid to unequal divisions of resources in postcolonial societies, aboriginal and settler relations, religious and ethnic turmoil, conflicting class interests within postcolonial political formations and international alliances forged by the new indigenous ruling classes, pre-colonial history. As a result of institutional mechanisms and globalising market-oriented strategies, the radical potential of specific histories and cultures is usually erased. Thus, we now have a canon of postcolonial literature in which poetry, drama and popular fiction that are usually more deeply conditioned by local forms and contexts are not likely to be included in the canon. The postcolonial theory and literature canon then

participates in a system of selections and elisions that replicates the technologies of power it is charged with exposing.

For all these reasons, the privileging of the postcolonial theoretical framework in the teaching of postcolonial literature is itself reinvigorating a continued Western imperium in a number of ways, so much so that postcolonial critics, teachers and practitioners may become more often than not complicit in the consolidation of hegemony in the very process of questioning it.

The rapid institutionalisation of postcolonial studies in the UK has been enabled by the material conditions of the world outside, the outside having defined the inside, so to speak. The commodity status of postcolonial studies is no secret to anybody. Those engaged in the field of postcolonial studies in Western universities operate *de facto* within the institutional and capitalist economy of exchange even as they celebrate the radicalism 'contained' in the postcolonial. The postcolonial text functions within a circuit of desire, production, consumption and exchange. Given the dominant trends in the production and consumption of postcolonial literature: 'one might speculate that the market economy orients the text toward the centre, casts the student as consumer and the teacher, willy-nilly, as purveyor, facilitator and credentialed tour guide' (Bahri 284).

The functional economy and orientation of the postcolonial text are issues that are as important for pedagogy as they are for postcolonial studies. Graham Huggan has commented on the postcolonial as 'sales tag' for the international commodity culture of late capitalism (24). Within this economy, the value of commodity A (that is, African text) acquires validation, certification and objective existence through reference to commodity B (that is, the novel, or European standards in terms of form and theme), which then becomes the value of A. In other words, European culture would select an aspect of African culture that it can embody and express. The writings from postcolonial societies are then judged by conformity to standards of the mainstream novel, which is the form most likely to be directed at and published for a world-wide audience.

Paradoxically then, if the postcolonial involves the breaking down of Eurocentric codes and the recognition of indigenous voices in the formation of postcolonial culture, it also manipulates peoples, boundaries and cultures to appropriate the local for the global, to admit 'difference' into the realm of capital only to remake it in accordance with the requirements of production and consumption. The global in a sense incorporates the local in its project only to the extent in which the local meets the global requirements by providing a difference that is neither too alien nor too threatening. Elleke Boehmer is right to assert that 'it is significant that postcolonial writers who retain a more national focus who don't straddle worlds, or translate well, do not rank high in the West as do their migrant fellows' (239).

An excessive interest in the fiction of migrants is contributing to a further marginalisation of partisan and resistance literature, especially of those narratives that explore other resistances and subversions and are normally written in local

languages. A hierarchy of margin is then created with 'local' narratives that are deemed uncongenial to metropolitan taste and therefore untranslated and largely undiscussed within the academies at the bottom, and migrant narratives at the top. The preference within postcolonial discussion for hybrid, 'mestizo' or creolised formations privileges a fissured postcolonial identity and marginalises the inventions of the local, the indigenous (Brennan). According to Benita Parry, 'the use of "diaspora" as a synonym for a new kind of cosmopolitanism that is certainly relevant to writers, artists, academics, intellectuals and professionals can entail forgetfulness about that other, economically enforced dispersal of the poor from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean' (72).

The globalising tendency of postcolonial theory and pedagogy results in an over-valorisation of deterritorialised, border-crossing elites as the possessors of some special kind of truth at the expense of other unsettled diasporas. The grouping of migrant writing like Rohiton Mistry's with aboriginal writers in postcolonial literature courses has further erased the difference between documents produced in non-Western countries and those others produced by immigrants at metropolitan locations. 'With the passage of time', Aijaz Ahmad worriedly asserts, 'migrant writing will be the only authentic document of resistance in our time' (91). Postcolonialism's versatility and global intentions become problematic if not seen in tandem with the realities of struggles within specific postcolonial locations. Courses based on universalising vocabulary and symbols like 'mimicry', 'hybridity', 'the marginalised', only replicate strategies of 'cultural imperialism' by reducing highly differentiated histories and cultures to the standardising drive of metropolitan capitalism. For Cathryn McConaghy 'the need is to understand how particular textual strategies and particular portrayals of postcolonial subjectivity are used to legitimate certain interests and to achieve particular social formations' (266).

Ironically, even if postcolonialism seeks to homogenise populations globally, it enhances awareness of the local, pointing to it as the site of resistance to capital. This celebration of the local is problematic too as the local is not always the site of liberation but may also be a site of oppression and is generally characterised by internal inequalities and discrepancies once associated with colonial differences, now aggravated by global forces at work which may condition the local in the first place. The local is valuable as a site for resistance to the global but only to the extent that it also serves as the site of negotiation to abolish inequality and oppression inherited from the past.

The imposition of a Western mono-cultural academic discursive paradigm calls for attention to intercultural insensitivity. Postcolonial studies' complexity and multidisciplinary would appear to be ideally suited to studying Anglophone cultural production. Yet, postcolonial theory's insistence on similarities rather than on interdependent interactions fails to recognise that Anglophone literary production is situated at the intersection of different historical, linguistic and

social phenomena where synthesis must be negotiated. What Ahmad bewails is the postcolonial denial of history, specifically the histories of peoples with their distinctive trajectories of survival and achievement. As Carol Boyce Davies points out:

Postcolonial theory emphasises the importance of historical context, cultural relativity and geographical specificity, yet as a body of literature, it represents the daily interactions of $\frac{3}{4}$ of the globe. As a result, it erases crucial differences within and between Third World locations, although it proposes a process of de-colonisation. (81)

More integrative views between postcolonial theory's assumptions and applications and Anglophone literatures' diversified contexts and specificities are therefore needed. In this respect, the study of the interplay of numerous different elements and factors inherent in the teaching of postcolonial theory and literature is a crucial and on-going process. Postcolonial theory and consequently, courses based on that theory, need to engage more deeply with internal hierarchies and divisions in postcolonial societies. They need to focus on the texts' engagement with the material conditions and cultural ideologies prevailing in the social formations these texts belong to while simultaneously paying attention to global issues and concerns. Historically specific struggles with their own infinitely variegated strands of residual, dominant and emergent formations need to be configured within the world-system of 'actually existing capitalism' (San Juan 22). The very operation of capital has created new opportunities but also new dilemmas and contradictions that have brought about the local and the global to the forefront of political consciousness. In this sense, then, under the circumstances of global capitalism the local cannot be conceived without reference to the global.

If the understanding and reception of postcolonial literature are on the one hand linked to new global mechanisms of production and consumption, on the other, local issues of place and ethnic identity are increasingly challenging Western norms. Although global market forces are guiding, and in some cases, dictating the process of canon formation, and though we are all engaged with the new, truly global empire that globalised capitalism has created, we must be able to ground our analysis in the power of both the local and the global. The inclusion of the local within the global must be accompanied with the realisation of the danger of absorbing the outsider into well-defined and convenient categories and of treating oppression and exploitation as academic subjects in the pejorative sense. Meenakshi Mukherjee's warning against 'making the specific configuration of circumstances in particular regions subservient to a global paradigm' (7) points to the danger of universalising ambitions and the pressures of globalisation in the academy. Micheal Hardt and Antonio Negri insist that regardless of where we are, whether in core or excluded zones, 'we are all engaged with the new, truly global empire that globalised capital has created; and although we may see ourselves as operating from sites of local resistance to empire, we must ground our analysis in the power of the global multitude' (46).

Although 'no education is politically neutral', (hooks 37) and, as Spivak rightly states, 'we are in our everyday, agents of exploitation', (1996 84) it is also true that one can set the limits of complicity. Complicity also does not mean intentionality. Our responsibility as teachers involves recognising those structures — social, cultural, economic and so forth — that both enable and contain our activities. There is undoubtedly a pressing need not to abandon the terrain of postcolonial studies simply because of its imbrication with the hegemonic. Rather, many critics, teachers and scholars agree that it is crucial to acknowledge that a 'critical postcolonialism' may be able to draw forth the potential for resistance and change within the academy and society at large (Giroux). One way of doing this would be to start considering strategies for radical interventions at both theoretical and pedagogical levels, to formulate practices of resistance against the system of which the postcolonial canon is a product. A critically postcolonial canon should be always in revision and contestation, its critics conscious of both its historical and ideological constructedness and their pedagogical goals.

A 'critical postcolonialism' explores the fissures, tensions and contradictory demands of multiple cultures, rather than only celebrating the plurality of cultures by passing through them appreciatively. Within the specific domain of the current uses of postcolonialism within the academy instead, the reading of postcolonial literary texts may be taken as an occasion for the negotiation of difference, the fusion of horizons, the creation of individuals 'educated' as to the proper negotiations of race, gender, class, ethnicity. More precisely, the reading of postcolonial literature may be seen to set a stage for a performance of difference — material history is reduced to an influence on the author's work, race relations are made manageable and students are able to 'relate' to highly diverse experiences by reducing difference to individual encounters via ethnic texts and literary texts assume their status as authentic, unmediated representations of difference. As Hazel Carby notes:

Even teachers who would normally eschew the use of filmic, televisual or fictional literary texts to solve real-life problems can find themselves arguing that the use of texts which represent blacks positively somehow reflects the needs of ethnic minorities and would allow teachers to combat racism in the classroom. (66)

Although the use of such materials in itself is not necessarily counterproductive, what demands attention are the pedagogical and political assumptions of such decontextualised representations. Barbara Christian, Renato Rosaldo and others have noted how the critical operations of contemporary literary discourse have had the effect of objectifying diverse ethnic cultural texts as minority discourse in ways that collapse particular modes of articulating resistance within singular theoretical frameworks (Christian).

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, too, addresses the particular problematic of the use of ethnic literary texts as 'representations' of specifically designated groups and notes the rise of :

[a] pedagogy in which we all occupy separate, different and equally valuable places and where experience is defined not in terms of individual qua individual, but in terms of an individual as representative of a cultural group. This results in a depoliticalization and dehistoricization of the idea of culture and makes possible the implicit management of race in the name of cooperation and harmony. (195)

Thus, under these types of pedagogical arrangements, students are able to partake of the postcolonial 'experience' through the careful guidance of the tutor — obstacles to understanding are cleared away, tensions explained and social harmony is established in the end. The basic operation of many educational apparatuses is still to manage and neutralise conflict, channelling it into more 'productive', that is, non-threatening subject formations. Institutions often wish to accommodate and thereby neutralise and manage the 'race question'. Henry Giroux notes that in this operation, the 'problem' of race and ethnicity is largely identified within the racialised Other, and the 'white' is largely erased. 'Whiteness' instead should be considered as one ethnicity among others and should be included in any postcolonial class discussion. In the classroom, one must therefore be willing to bring conflicts and debates to the table and engage students in conversations about the reason for the containment of 'national' literatures within postcolonial courses, the purpose of such modules, their expectations from such courses and the limitations that we face together. A 'progressive' pedagogy would maintain a constant mode of revision and re-evaluation, that is, any formulation or study of the postcolonial canon should be attentive to the complex and often contradictory status of its texts as marginal to and yet inserted within the academy by particular and non-homogeneous interests. The reduction of such texts within the economics of pedagogy (within a fixed term of study, serving particular institutional requirements and having to be read in conjunction with other texts to the exclusion of others) should not be covered up but queried and rethought with students. It is in recognising the historical complexities and contradictions of inserting postcolonial literature into the curriculum and questioning a 'manageable', mainstream diversity that we begin to productively engage postcolonialism.

Educators then should promote readings of postcolonial literature that attempt to account for diverse and contradictory modes of interpretation and critique within the specificities of history, national cultural politics and transnational movements of people and cultural objects. One should then argue against the insertion of this literature into the canon via a simple reading of common themes and issues, and for a mode of critically understanding multicultural texts within a complex set of relations. In this sense, we should argue for readings that favour a more complex understanding of historical contingency, cultural politics and ethnic identifications. When postcolonial literature programmes focus on comparisons and commonalities, they often overlook the fact that postcolonial literary texts do not only speak to the empire but that they are also in conversation with those on

the home territory. Also, it is necessary to consider how the texts of a particular 'group' may occupy specific institutional positions. Turning to specific texts, one needs to critique how ethnic 'voices' are constituted within the interstices of dominant aesthetics and ideologies of postcolonial discourses.

Designing courses that focus on a single region or at most two is also essential as many have recognised that the problem with postcolonial literature courses is likely to be 'insensitivity to historical materialities' (Dirlif 331). As the postcolonial literary text depends on the totality of the symbolic resources of the culture and the history the text emanates from, the teacher's task will be to alert students to the culture-specific aspect of these symbolic codes. The growth of such awareness ought to be the result of his/her teaching. The final goal is to move students away from the fake universality that denies differences that are irreducible to known formulae, only because it projects its own ethnocentrism on the other. The teacher of postcolonial literatures then is called to develop vigilance against systemic appropriations of the 'margin' rather than continue to pathetically dramatise 'victimage'. In order to do this, the teacher should be able to 'reverse, displace and seize the apparatus of value-coding' (Spivak 63). A way to realise this project is to start thinking about the implications of the naming, the structuring of the so-called 'field', the position from which one speaks/teaches. Arun Mukherjee is right in urging Third World teachers of postcolonial literatures in the West to acknowledge their 'contradictory' location as mediators between the metropolis and the periphery:

We lack power in the western academic set-up in comparison with our colleagues who teach English or American literatures but we exercise tremendous power in terms of our position as mediators between third world writing and its readers in the first world.... Until the material conditions surrounding the teaching and theorising of postcolonial literatures are brought to light, until their contradictions are acknowledged, the teaching and theorising of third world literature remain yet another gesture of objectification of third world cultures and societies, despite the theorists' claims of radicalism. (15)

Following on from this point, what one needs to confront is the fact that not all marginality is equally marginal, that there is a world of difference between culture written from the perspectives of oppressed groups and culture written from the perspectives of diasporic (or settler colonies) intellectuals normally located in the First World but who, even when writing from the peripheries of nations and empires, are seated in the centres of global power. The insistence on uniformity should then be challenged by rejecting institutional practices and the capitalist logic that insist only on those differences that can be regulated.

Another radical intervention could be to argue for heightened vigilance against the exclusion from consideration of works that do not match profiles of postcoloniality in the West. In other words, setting a limit to the selection of texts for institutional reasons that promotes the view that the postcolony exists only within a relationship to the West. The aim is not merely to enlarge the canon

by producing a counter-canon which is still already heavily influenced by the market but to dethrone canonical method. One way to do that is by keeping an eye on the multiple and irregular movement of the local and the overall. So long as we are interested in hiring and firing, in grants and allocations, in budgets, in publishing radical texts, in fighting for tenure and recommending for jobs, we are in capitalism and we cannot avoid competition and individualism. Under these circumstances, essentialising difference may lead to unproductive conflict among ourselves. However, it is also imperative that authority is secured to specific cultural systems and historical agents. 'Only then can we begin to put together the story of the development of a cosmopolitanism that is global' (Spivak 278).

A focus on societies' own internal centres and peripheries, their own dominants and margins, and not just on those aspects of a text that are likely to foreground its relevance and intelligibility for a British audience is also essential. Inasmuch as teachers and students are the consumers, we must be willing to opt for the most useful curricular choices for our needs instead of only the readily available ones by also exploring what small presses and clearing houses can offer us. Beyond a general invitation to cultivate vigilance, strategies must develop from a sense of the whole as well as the particular by reconciling the pressures of diversity and difference with those for integration and commonality.

Postcolonial educators should therefore advocate a reworking of both the courses and the theory by encompassing concerns about globalisation in terms of the changing role of international corporations, the changing patterns of migration and the influence of the new global reality on identity formation in postcolonial societies with insights into unsettling indigenous ways of thinking which challenge not only curricula but the shape and nature of Western society. Ongoing processes of economic and cultural globalisation are tending to wipe out local cultural identities and histories. However, as John Willinski rightly points out: 'the world is still beset by struggles of ethnic nationalism, hardening of racial lines and staggering divides between wealth and poverty' (1). The challenge of postcolonial pedagogy is to help students understand these two contradictory though intertwined historical processes and to consider them as operating simultaneously. A 'progressive' pedagogy then is the one that attends to the partial, specific contexts of differentiated communities and strategies of power, without ignoring larger theoretical and relational narratives; a pedagogy that embraces the local and the global and recognises the role of the global in shaping the local.

Furthermore, postcolonial theory should always be proposed or contemplated by educators not as 'a coherent and self-contained critical model, separated from real differences and the problems that are being accounted for or discussed' (Quayson and Goldberg 8). Postcolonial teaching involves helping students to identify and critique the different regimes of truth that characterise our social arrangements and to build positive identities that move easily between the local and the global. We need to learn and teach how to distinguish between 'internal

colonisation' — the patters of exploitation and domination within societies — and the various different heritages and operations of colonisation in the rest of the world. Thus we must negotiate between nationalism (uni- or multi-cultural) and globality. To remain anchored to a mere ethnic pride and a basically static ethnicity is to confuse political gestures with an awareness of history.

The way in which to understand the complex interactions between the global and local is not to see them in mechanical terms of hard and fast polarities, but rather in terms of overlaps, and even the overlaps themselves have to be complexly grasped. Difference as contradiction still exists amid globalisation but the point is to rearticulate it within a differentiated concrete totality. Unity and diversity then, would not appear as opposite concepts but as complementary perspectives. In this way, the local and the global would be able to share a place within a multiply specialised discipline such as postcolonial studies.

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